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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - COLOMBIA

1. This Travel Warning updates and reminds American citizens of ongoing security concerns in Colombia. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Colombia. While security in Colombia has improved significantly in recent years, violence by narco-terrorist groups continues to affect some rural areas and cities. The potential for violence by terrorists and other criminal elements exists in all parts of the country. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Colombia issued February 05, 2008.

2. Violence has decreased markedly in many urban areas; however, the level of violence in Buenaventura remains high. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can still be extremely dangerous due to the presence of narco-terrorists. Common crime remains a significant problem in many urban and rural areas. For additional details about the general criminal threat, please see the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia.

3. The incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak at the beginning of this decade. Nevertheless, terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. Kidnapping in rural areas is of particular concern. On July 2, 2008, the Government of Colombia rescued 15 hostages, including three Americans, who had been held for more than 5 years. Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped Americans, it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to or strike deals with kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist

kidnapping victims is limited.

¶4. U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia are permitted to travel to major cities in the country, but normally only by air. They cannot use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. All Americans in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions.

¶5. As the Department develops information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threats through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. U.S. citizens should consult warden messages for Colombia at [http://bogota.usembassy.gov/acs\\_wardenmessage.html](http://bogota.usembassy.gov/acs_wardenmessage.html) and <http://bogota.usembassy.gov/wwwsc093.shtml>, as well as the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia and the Worldwide Caution at <http://travel.state.gov>. U.S. travelers can also get up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or for overseas callers, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

¶6. Minimize considered.

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